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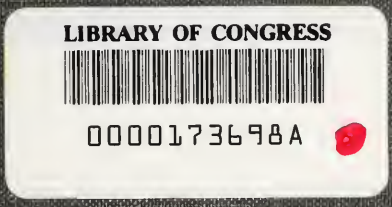

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MEMORIAL

OF THE

PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY.

FEBRUARY 3, 1820.

Referred to the Committee on so much of the President's Message as relates to the Slave Trade.

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1820.

TO THE HONORABLE THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES.

The President and Board of Managers of the American Colonization Society, respectfully represent that, being about to commence the execution of the object to which their views have been long directed, they deem it proper and necessary to address themselves to the legislative council of their country. They trust that this object will be considered, in itself, of great national importance, will be found inseparably connected with another, vitally affecting the honor and interest of this nation, and leading, in its consequences, to the most desirable results.

Believing that examination and reflection will shew that such are its connections and tendency, they are encouraged to present themselves, and their cause, where they know that a public measure, having these advantages, cannot fail to receive all the countenance and aid it may require.

The last census shews the number of the free people of color of the United States, and their rapid increase. Supposing them to increase in the same ratio, it will appear how large a proportion of our population will, in the course of even a few years, consist of persons of that description.

No argument is necessary to shew that this is very far indeed from constituting an increase of our physical strength; nor can there be a population, in any country, neutral as to its effects upon society. The least observation shews that this description of persons are not, and cannot be, either useful or happy among us; and many considerations, which need not be mentioned, prove, beyond dispute, that it is best, for all the parties interested, that there should be a separation; that those who are now free, and those who may become so hereafter, should be provided with the means of attaining to a state of respectability and happiness, which, it is certain, they have never yet reached, and, therefore, can never be likely to reach in this country.

Several of the States, deeply interested in this subject, have already applied to the general government; and, concurring in the views of your memorialists, both from considerations of justice towards themselves and humanity towards the colored people, have expressed, to the general government, their desire that a country should be procured for them, in the land of their forefathers, to which such of them, as should choose to avail themselves of the opportunity, might be removed. It has been the one single object of the Society, which your memorialists represent, to effect this end. They have made the most cautious and particular inquiries, as to the practicability of such

a plan and its prospects of success, both in this country and in Africa, and they are warranted in declaring, that there are no difficulties which they do not confidently expect will be easily overcome by a moderate exertion of discretion and perseverance.

In this country, and in almost every part of it, they have found a zealous and decided approbation expressed, both in words and deeds, by a vast majority of all classes of our citizens; and this sentiment is continually increasing as the measure becomes more the subject of discussion and reflection. Its importance all admit; and its practicability, though doubted by many, at first, is daily less questioned.

The two last reports of the Society, to which your memorialists beg leave to refer, shew the success of their mission to Africa, and the result of their inquiries upon that continent. From those it is manifest that a situation can be readily obtained, favorable to commerce and agriculture, in a healthy and fertile country, and that the natives are well disposed to give every encouragement to the establishment of such a settlement among them. Thus, it appears, that an object of great national concern, already expressly desired by some of the states and truly desirable to all, receiving, also, the approbation of those upon whom it is more immediately to operate, is brought within our reach.

But this subject derives, perhaps, its chief interest from its connection with a measure which has, already, to the honor of our country, occupied the deliberations of the Congress of the United States.

Your memorialists refer, with pleasure, to the Act, passed at the last session of Congress, supplementary to the Act formerly passed for the suppression of the slave trade. The means afforded, by the provisions of that Act, for the accomplishment of its object, are certainly great; but the total extirpation of this disgraceful trade, cannot, perhaps, be expected from any measures which rely, alone, upon the employment of a maritime force, however considerable.

The profits attending it are so extraordinary, that the cupidity of the unprincipled will still tempt them to continue it, as long as there is any chance of escaping the vigilance of the cruizers engaged against them. From the best information your memorialists have been able to obtain, of the nature, causes, and course of this trade, and of the present situation of the coast of Africa, and the habits and dispositions of the natives, they are well assured that the suppression of the African slave trade, and the civilization of the natives, are measures of indispensable connection.

Such an opinion has been avowed, many years ago, by those best acquainted with this subject, and experience has abundantly confirmed it.

The documents and papers which your memorialists had heretofore the honor of presenting to Congress, and those contained in the late reports of the Society, prove this position.

Since the establishment of the English settlement at Sierra Leone, the slave trade has been rapidly ceasing on that part of the coast.

Not only the kingdoms in its immediate neighborhood, but those upon the Sherbro and Bagroo rivers, and others with whom the people of that settlement have opened a communication, have been prevailed upon to abandon it, and are turning their attention to the ordinary and innocent pursuits of civilized nations.

That the same consequences will result from similar settlements cannot be doubted. When the natives there see that the European commodities, for which they have been accustomed to exchange their fellow-beings, until vast and fertile regions have become almost depopulated, can be more easily and safely obtained by other pursuits, can it be believed that they will hesitate to profit by the experience? Nor will the advantages of civilization be alone exhibited. That Religion, whose mandate is "peace on earth and good will towards men," will "do its errand," will deliver them from the bondage of their miserable superstitions, and display the same triumphs which it is achieving in every land.

That such points of settlement would diffuse their light around the coast, and gradually dispel the darkness which has so long enshrouded that continent, would be a reasonable hope, and would justify the attempt, even if experience had not ascertained its success. Although, therefore, much may be effected by the vigilance of a well disposed naval force, it is to be feared that much will always remain to be done, until some degree of civilization is attained by the inhabitants of the coast of Africa. The present measures, therefore, for the suppression of the slave trade, if unconnected with others for the improvement of the natives, must be long continued, and the effects produced by them must be partial, tedious, and uncertain; and the least relaxation of this vigilance will revive it.

But those measures, and all others involving expense and labor, may be withdrawn, as soon as these establishments on the coast become strong enough to participate in the contest against avarice and inhumanity, and shall obtain, from their evident advantages over the natives, a proper influence among them. And here your memorialists beg leave, respectfully, to suggest their fears that many of the profligate adventurers in this trade will evade the search of our cruizers by their artful contrivances in disguising their national character. We have reason to believe that the slave ships of other nations assume the flag and character of Americans to avoid the search of British cruizers. Is it not, therefore, to be expected that the act lately passed will often be defeated by American slave ships assuming a foreign flag and character? A careful consideration of this subject has convinced us that all our efforts will be insufficient to accomplish their purposes, unless some friendly arrangement can be made among the maritime powers of the world, which shall leave no shelter to those who deserve to be considered and treated as the common enemies of mankind.

Whether a permission, under any modification, to certain specified ships, or in certain latitudes, to search and seize slave ships, under

our flag, such as Great Britain, and other European powers, have mutually given to each other, can be properly granted by our government, we cheerfully leave to the wisdom and justice of Congress to determine. Your memorialists will only express their hope and belief, that your deliberations on this interesting subject will enable you to discern a way, without any compromitment of our national honor, by which our country may be placed among the foremost and most efficient asserters of the rights of humanity. But your memorialists humbly consider, that the colonization of Africa offers the most powerful and indispensable auxiliary to the means already adopted, for the extermination of a trade, which is now exciting, in every country, that just indignation, which has been long since felt and expressed in this.

No nation has it so much in its power to furnish proper settlers for such an establishment as this; no nation has so deep an interest in thus disposing of them. By the law passed at the last session, and before referred to, the captives who may be taken by our cruisers, from the slave ships, are to be taken to Africa, and delivered to the custody of agents appointed by the President. There will then be a settlement of captured negroes upon the coast, in consequence of the measures already adopted. And it is evidently most important, if not necessary to such a settlement, that the civilized people of color, of this country, whose industry, enterprise, and knowledge of agriculture, and the arts, would render them most useful assistants, should be connected with such an establishment.

When, therefore, the object of the Colonization Society is viewed, in connection with that entire suppression of the slave trade, which your memorialists trust it is resolved shall be effected, its importance becomes obvious and extreme. The beneficial consequences resulting from success in such a measure, it is impossible to calculate. To the general cause of humanity, it will afford the most rich and noble contribution, and for the nation that regards that cause, that employs its power in its behalf, it cannot fail to procure a proportionate reward. It is by such a course that a nation secures to itself the protection and favor of the Governor of the world. Nor are there wanting views and considerations, arising from our peculiar political institutions, which would justify the sure expectation of the most signal blessings to ourselves from the accomplishment of such an object. If one of these consequences shall be the gradual, and almost imperceptible, removal of a national evil, which all unite in lamenting, and for which, with the most intense, but hitherto hopeless anxiety, the patriots and statesmen of our country have labored to discover a remedy, who can doubt, that, of all the blessings we may be permitted to bequeath to our descendants, this will receive the richest tribute of their thanks and veneration?

Your memorialists cannot believe that such an evil, universally acknowledged and deprecated, has been irremoveably fixed upon us. Some way will always be opened by Providence, by which a people,

desirous of acting justly and benevolently, may be led to the attainment of a meritorious object. And they believe, that, of all the plans, which the most sagacious and discerning of our patriots have suggested, for effecting what they have so greatly desired, the colonization of Africa, in the manner proposed, presents the fairest prospects of success. But if it be admitted to be ever so doubtful, whether this happy result shall be the reward of our exertions, yet if great and certain benefits immediately attend them, why may not others, still greater, follow them.

In a work evidently progressive, who shall assign limits to the good that zeal and perseverance shall be permitted to accomplish? Your memorialists beg leave to state, that, having expended considerable funds in prosecuting their inquiries and making preparations, they are now about to send out a colony, and complete the purchase, already stipulated for with the native kings and chiefs of Sherbro, of a suitable territory for their establishment. The number they are now enabled to transport and provide for, is but a small proportion of the people of color who have expressed a desire to go. And without a larger and more sudden increase of their funds than can be expected from the voluntary contributions of individuals, their progress must be slow and uncertain. They have always flattered themselves with the hope, that when it was seen they had surmounted the difficulties of preparation, and shewn that means applied to the execution of their design, would lead directly and evidently to its accomplishment, they should be enabled to obtain for it the national countenance and assistance. To this point they have arrived; and they therefore respectfully request, that this interesting subject may receive the consideration of your honorable body, and that the Executive Department may be authorized, in such way as may meet your approbation, to extend to this object such pecuniary and other aid, as it may be thought to require and deserve.

Your memorialists further request, that the subscribers to the American Colonization Society may be incorporated, by act of Congress, to enable them to act with more efficiency, in carrying on the great and important objects of the society, and to enable them, with more economy, to manage the benevolent contributions entrusted to their care.

JOHN MASON,
W. JONES,
E. B. CALDWELL,
F. S. KEY.
} *Committee.*

Washington, February 1, 1820.

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